

Spirit Clayborn lives with his sister, Emily, in the slums of Crossus. Orphans after the arrest of their parents, the siblings struggle to survive. Emily receives the diagnosis of leukemia, and Spirit enters the underground cannibal fights to pay for her treatment. His final fight was against Meiko, who summons shadow apparitions that hold Spirit incapable of defending himself. Before he succumbs to his injuries, Spirit feels a rush of power. He has a magical sword appear and cut off Meiko's hand. The cannibals become enraged, and Spirit is taken to a room, where he loses his arm. Before any more damage is done, a man made of wood rescues the unconscious fighter. Spirit awakens to see Zix and Iggy. They had rescued him and his sister. Zix explains that Emily can be cured by the doctors for the Vanguard as long as Spirit passes their tests.

Meanwhile, Archdemon Xaxus has grown his army of demons. He wanted to enslave humanity and drain them of their aether, which would cause their death. His elderly father, Demonarch Yaxus, had made a treaty with humans to work alongside them in peace. He appoints Astaroth to prepare a speech to convince the demons that avoiding war is in their best interests. However, Astaroth is troubled by Xaxus' call for war to end the famine that threatened their lives. Xaxus, Thrazul, and Glissirix oppose Demonarch Yaxus, and Astaroth wonders if they may be right after seeing demons feeding on women and children in small villages. Julius Krane, the leader of the cannibals, approaches Archdemon Xaxus. He swears loyalty and offers to show Xaxus how to get past the Crossus' wall. Taking down the wall would allow Xaxus to defeat the Vanguard and rule over humanity.

I.P. Eviston's *Demonslayer* is the first book in the Vanguard Chronicles. The Vanguard are elite fighters that are sent on the most dangerous missions. The character development is exceptional, as it provides the perspective of several characters. Spirit was a metal summoner capable of using multiple weapons at the same time without physically touching them. Amelia was out to show everyone that enchanters could help with combat. She was an exceptional strategist. Dimitri was a titan who had immeasurable strength and could manipulate water into any form. While he would not have attempted to be part of the Vanguard, he was connected to Skylar. Skylar was an unstable fire titan who dreamed of being in the Vanguard. Her resilience in battle had no limit. Rounding out Spirit's squad was Taya. Taya was a summoner who was forced into serving the Vanguard or being executed. Working as a cohesive group, they could take on powerful adversaries and protect one another.

I have nothing negative to say about this epic fantasy story. The vivid details of each moment were easy to envision. The emotions of every person were relatable, and I understood their motivation. There were moments of humor in the unpredictable plot. For instance, Dimitri always wore a tie, a dress shirt, and slacks. When in training, he carried seven identical outfits. If something was torn or dirty, he would change. In one scene, he took his tie off and folded it so it wouldn't get dirty.

I rate *Demonslayer* five out of five stars. I was impressed with all of the elements Eviston put together in one book. Giving a voice to both sides adds depth to the unpredictable plot. I enjoyed seeing the personal thoughts of the characters. The editing was professional, and the transition between scenes and characters was easy to follow.

Demonlayer will appeal to young adults who like fantasy stories full of action. There is mild violence, death, and profanity that could be overwhelming for sensitive readers. I look forward to continuing reading this series.